

# Christ in Media Institute at Bethany Lutheran College

## By-Laws

### ***Background: the need for the Institute's work***

The Christ in Media Institute supports scholarly study of the theology, history, and practice of Christian use of mass media, aiming to promote effective presentations of Christian Gospel messages to general audiences throughout the world.

There is no need to elaborate on the extent of unbelief in the world today, and the need to bring to people everywhere the good news of the Gospel. While Word and Sacrament ministry to individuals, in small groups, and through congregations remains fundamental to the Great Commission, there are many millions of unbelievers, and far too few Christian teachers to reach them all individually or in small groups. We believe that God has provided us with tools by which to reach those vast audiences, namely, mass media. Moreover, doors may be opening today for Christian messages in a variety of media outlets. The program of this institute is unique in addressing this opportunity and meeting this need.

CMI is an institution of Bethany Lutheran College, which is an educational arm of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, whose theological position the institute embraces. The institute is designed to draw upon the unique resources at a Christian liberal arts college with strong academic programs and outstanding facilities in communication, the arts, the humanities, and the sciences, all built on a commitment to the teachings of Biblical and Confessional Lutheranism.

### ***I. Purposes of the Institute***

**A. Mission Statement:** The Christ in Media Institute, empowered by the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ, promotes research and education focused on employing God's gift of mass media to bring the Gospel message to vast audiences both in the US and abroad.

**B. Core Values:** The uniqueness of this mission is clarified by the following explanation of terms, which embody the institute's core values.

1. Promotion of the **Gospel**: the Gospel is the message of how Jesus Christ saved us. According to the Lutheran Confessions, the Gospel teaches that human creatures "cannot be justified before God by their own strength, merits, or works, but are freely justified for Christ's sake through faith, when they believe that they are received into favor and that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake, who by His death, has made satisfaction for our sins. This faith God accounts as righteousness in His sight" (*Augsburg Confession* IV and V). To draw a contrast, our message will not center on those spiritual emphases often portrayed in mainstream media, such as moralism ("we earn God's favor by doing good"), a shallow spirituality proclaiming an indulgent "loving" god apart from Jesus Christ, or messages aimed primarily at promoting or influencing political issues. Some of these approaches may have value in their place, others actually militate against the Gospel, but none are the central Christian message of the Great Commission – that Jesus Christ is our Savior. This is the Gospel we are committed to convey through media.
2. Use of **mass media**: The institute's primary interest is in visual media, especially cinema, television, and the internet. As technology changes rapidly, the institute will give attention to any medium useful in achieving the goal of bringing the Gospel to vast audiences.

3. Aiming at **vast audiences**: While productions intended for “in house” audiences (such as congregations and parochial schools) may be a useful byproduct of the institute’s work, it rather aspires to explore how to reach the audiences of network and movie-channel TV, of public cinema theatres, and of comparable venues both in the U.S. and abroad.
4. **International** and **intercultural scope**: The institute gives special attention to challenges of communicating the Gospel both within and across cultures, in a variety of political and social climates, for outreach via mass media into many parts of the world. We have much to learn from and about people in many places, in order to devise appropriate and effective means for bringing them the Gospel through mass media.
5. **Inter-disciplinary** approach: Theologians, communication and performance specialists, artists, cultural anthropologists, missionaries, musicians, historians, pastors, sociologists, and business specialists all have unique insights into ways the Gospel may be spread through mass media. The institute is charged to promote active discussions among practitioners of many disciplines, drawing on multiple understandings, insights, and contributions from virtually all academic disciplines.
6. Linking academy with **industry**: The institute provides opportunities for interaction and cooperation between students and teachers, on the one hand, and mass media practitioners – writers, producers, directors, composers, actors, and others in the mass media industries.
7. **Constructive** purpose: The institute is charged to encourage media production that is both spiritually vital and well grounded in Confessional Lutheran theology, and that has both integrity and relevance. While dealing with every aspect of human experience, its main concern is the presentation of the Gospel, and not taking or promoting positions on political or social issues.

## ***II. Functions of the Institute***

The institute designs and implements programs and activities in order to provide the following benefits:

1. to develop a body of knowledge and expertise in support of using mass media in broad and effective Christian mission outreach.
2. to encourage the development of new generations of skilled Christian artists and media creators using their talents in service of Gospel outreach.
3. to provide a rallying point for Christians who are working in the media industry and in education, who understand the Gospel, and who wish to use their talents and expertise to proclaim it through mass media.
4. to identify Bethany Lutheran College publicly as the center of an initiative unique in combining confessional Lutheran theology with media production.
5. to provide opportunities for interdisciplinary cooperation at Bethany Lutheran College, especially in the fine arts, social sciences, religion, business, and communication.
6. to assure that a mission flavor infuses Bethany’s various liberal arts programs and majors.
7. to direct Bethany’s investment in faculty, curriculum and facilities another step beyond the current important emphasis on Christian vocation, into the additionally important realm of mission service.

8. to provide a channel by which donors interested in these means of outreach can support an important contemporary Christian educational and missionary initiative.

### ***III. Activities of the Institute***

The above purposes and functions of CMI are achieved through a variety of activities, including the following:

#### **A. Scholarship**

1. Stimulating, sponsoring, and supporting research and publication, thereby producing knowledge and expertise that enable successful production of mass media messages bringing the Gospel to vast audiences.
2. More specifically, seeking through this scholarship answers to questions such as these:
  - i. How can challenges – technological, creative, cultural, legal, political, systemic – be identified and met in order successfully to convey Gospel messages through various mass media to audiences in various parts of the world?
  - ii. What are the particularly relevant aspects of American culture, and of cultures around the world, that must be addressed with Biblical messages of Law and Gospel?

#### **B. Education**

1. Hosting guest experts for presentations to Bethany students and others
2. Publishing information, guidelines and suggestions in support of the institute's mission
3. Creating a resource repository of relevant materials and example productions
4. Sponsoring festivals, competitions, and other forms of encouragement to develop a generation of young people skilled at the production of media messages conveying the Gospel
5. Facilitating workshops providing continuing education opportunities for high school and college faculty interested in extending the institute's mission into their own teaching
6. Providing college credit opportunities for Bethany students and others
7. Sponsoring relevant camps and other educational opportunities for young people

#### **C. Coalition building**

1. Creating a rallying point to attract the attention and services of academic and industry professionals who understand and are interested in supporting the institute's unique mission
2. Creating and maintaining a group of "CMI Fellows," professionals in education and the media industries, appointed by the Board of Directors on the basis of explicit criteria reflecting their extraordinary contributions, current or past, to the mission of the institute
3. Creating a system of "Student Fellows"; each school year a certain number of outstanding qualified and interested undergraduate students from Bethany Lutheran College and other institutions are invited to join the institute as Student Fellows – qualifications and privileges are to be designed by the Board of Directors.
4. Creating and maintaining an institute membership structure providing opportunities for individuals and institutions to support the institute's mission by paying dues, and in return receiving news updates and other membership benefits from the institute.

5. Supporting compatible outside groups through creative partnerships that extend the expertise of the institute into actual productions.

#### ***IV. Administration: Executive Director***

##### **A. Duties of the Executive Director**

1. Initiate and administer the programs of CMI, with the advice and consent of the Board of Directors
2. Supervise CMI staff
3. Seek to secure external funding for CMI
4. Serve as chief liaison between CMI and its Board of Directors
5. Serve as budget officer for the CMI and oversee the budget of all CMI activities.
6. Provide an annual report, to be submitted first to the Board of Directors for review, and then to the president of Bethany Lutheran College. The director shall submit a summary of the annual report to Bethany's Faculty Assembly for information.
7. In consultation with the Board of Directors chair, prepare the agenda and necessary materials for meetings of the board. These materials are to be submitted to the secretary of the board for distribution.
8. Represent the institute officially to the media, at special occasions, and at institute activities

##### **B. Status of the Executive Director**

1. The executive director shall hold faculty status, either full-time or adjunct, in the academic department corresponding with his or her training and expertise, and shall receive a course load consideration to be negotiated at the beginning of the director's term. The Executive Director must be able to represent the institute and the Christian faith to academic, church, industry, and general audiences. The Executive Director should have a proven administrative ability, including skills in budgetary and personnel oversight, and in working collaboratively and effectively with governing boards, as well as with other organizations and agencies in partnering roles.
2. The executive director shall not serve as the chair of the Board of Directors.

##### **C. Selection of the Executive Director**

1. The president of Bethany Lutheran College shall appoint a search committee appropriate to the mission of the CMI. Search committee composition should ideally include at least one member representing each of the academic areas related to this mission (especially, but not limited to fine arts, social sciences, religion, business, and communication), and at least one member of the college Board of Regents. The vice president for academic affairs should be an ex officio member.
2. The search committee will make a recommendation to the president.
3. If departmental approval is necessary, their approval should be part of the recommendation to the president, so that the president's decision is final, not pending.
4. The executive director shall be appointed by the president for a three-year term, and may be re-appointed.

5. The executive director will report to the vice president for academic affairs.

#### **D. Evaluation of the Director**

1. By the beginning of the third year of the executive director's three-year term, the vice president for academic affairs shall oversee an evaluation of the executive director's performance. The evaluation will be conducted by the vice president, incorporating input from the Board of Directors. The vice president shall submit to the president a recommendation regarding reappointment.

### ***V. Administration: Board of Directors***

#### **A. Composition**

1. The CMI Board of Directors shall consist of seven members, at least two of them Bethany Lutheran College faculty members.
2. The executive director of CMI will normally be present at board meetings as a non-voting ex officio member.
3. There are no other ex officio members appointed to the Board of Directors.

#### **B. Selection**

1. Members of the board are selected in view of their particular interest and expertise regarding the mission of the CMI.
2. They are appointed by the president of Bethany Lutheran College.
3. Board vacancies when they arise are filled by the president based on recommendations by the board.

#### **C. Secretarial Support**

1. A board secretary shall be selected from existing staff of Bethany Lutheran College, and appointed by the Board of Directors for a one-year term.
2. No limit shall be placed on the number of consecutive terms the board secretary may serve.
3. The board secretary shall arrange and distribute materials for meetings and submit minutes to the appropriate college entities.

#### **D. Terms**

1. Board of Directors members shall serve staggered, three-year terms. Terms shall be shortened as necessary to stagger the terms of the initial board.
2. Members whose terms have expired shall be eligible for reappointment.
3. Members may recommend a proxy during periods of sabbatical or other necessary absences, subject to the approval of the Board of Directors.

#### **E. Frequency of board meetings**

1. The executive director shall convene a meeting of the board at least once each full semester. Meetings may be held with the assistance of distance communication technology.
2. The board chair will convene additional meetings at the request of three or more members of the board. A quorum of at least three members must be present at all meetings.

## **F. The Chair**

1. The chair of the Board of Directors shall be selected by the board annually, the selection being made for the coming year at the last meeting of the current year.

## **G. Powers of the Board of Directors**

1. The board shall have powers of advice and consent with regard to the operation of CMI, holding the executive director accountable to these Bylaws and the policies of Bethany Lutheran College.
2. The board shall offer advice to the executive director on questions of initiatives, policies, and procedures of the CMI.
3. Board members may be active in conducting the various programs the institute undertakes.
4. The board shall approve a ceiling on the dollar amount of expenditures that can be made by the executive director without the consent of the board.
5. The executive director should seek funding from foundations and grant agencies outside Bethany Lutheran College. Awarded grants, however, require approval of the Board of Directors prior to the acceptance of the grant monies. The acceptance of such funding by the Board of Directors carries with it the board's approval of the distribution of the funds specified within the parameters of the grant.
6. Any reallocation among the various budget lines in excess of 10 percent of the total approved budget for that year requires the approval of the Board of Directors.
7. The board shall approve the next year's budget and expenditures in advance of the fiscal year.
8. The board shall receive routine financial statements at least once per full semester.
9. The president of Bethany Lutheran College, through reporting by the vice president of academic affairs, shall oversee external reviews and audits of the institute.

## ***VI. Hiring Policies***

- A. If the CMI should hire staff, all college policies relating to hiring and reviewing of employees shall be followed.
- B. Employee position descriptions, titles and wages should be consistent with Bethany Lutheran College's human resources policies.

## ***VII. Amendment***

- A. These ByLaws may be amended by a vote of at least 5 (five) of the seven members of the Board of Directors. The powers of the Board of Directors shall be exercised in accord with the Bylaws.
- B. Amendments approved by the Board then go to the president of Bethany Lutheran College for approval, and to the Faculty Assembly for information. In consultation with the executive director, the president may recommend substantial changes to the Board of Directors for approval.

Amendments:

Article V. A. 1 was amended on May 19, 2015, increasing the number of Board members from five to seven.

Article VII. A. was amended on May 19, 2015, setting the Board vote for amending the ByLaws to at least five of the seven members.